

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIII, Issue No. 352

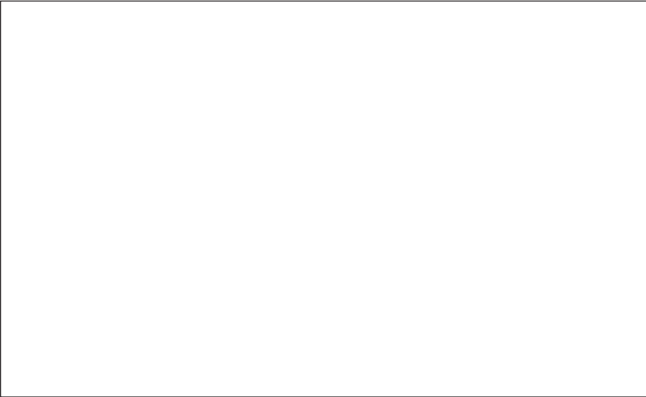
THURSDAY DECEMBER 18, 2003

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I N S I D E


Local

WEATHER FORECAST




PICTURE TIME: 2:25 A.M., DECEMBER 17, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.


A monsoon trough extends from 6N130E through a tropical disturbance near 8N145E and finally to near 5N160E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with the disturbance are found in the Mariana islands as well as between Yap and Chuuk or between 4N and 16N from 139E to 153E. Just east of the monsoon trough, a surface trough of low pressure continues to near the equator at 168E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are developing north and east of the trough or within 100 miles either side of a line from 9N160E to the equator at 173E, including Kosrae. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms across portions of the Marshall islands, between 4N and 16N from 170E to 180.




SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Cloudy and breezy with scattered showers, some locally heavy, and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 20-25 mph. Gusting in 35 mph in showers.
Temperature: Lows near 78. Highs near 86.




GUAM AND ROTA
Cloudy and breezy with scattered showers, some locally heavy, and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 20-25 mph. Gusting in 35 mph in showers.
Temperature: Lows near 78. Highs near 86.




PALAU
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.




POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.




YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.






















KOSRAE
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Southeast at 10 kt.



CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers with a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: Northeast at 10-15 kt.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
 Auckland	Cloudy	61F (16C)	49F (9C)
 Beijing	Sunny	44F (7C)	26F (-3C)
 Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	74F (23C)	61F (16C)
 Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	86F (30C)	72F (22C)
 London, England	Cloudy	56F (13C)	45F (7C)
 Los Angeles	Cloudy	69F (21C)	51F (11C)
 Manila	Cloudy	88F (31C)	71F (22C)
 Melbourne	Sunny	73F (23C)	54F (12C)
 Miami	Partly Cloudy	84F (29C)	75F (24C)
 New York, NY	Cloudy	52F (11C)	48F (9C)
 Osaka	Rain	54F (12C)	46F (8C)
 Paris	Cloudy	53F (12C)	41F (5C)
 Pusan	Rain	58F (14C)	43F (6C)
 Rome	Partly Cloudy	55F (13C)	39F (4C)
 Salem, Oregon	Rain	54F (12C)	38F (3C)
 San Francisco	Sunny	64F (18C)	47F (5C)
 Seoul	Rain	52F (11C)	45F (7C)
 Tokyo	Rain	55F (13C)	49F (9C)
 Washington, DC	Cloudy	60F (16C)	48F (9C)

Guerrero: Yangetmai has the right to question Teacher Rep poll result

Board of Education member Herman Guerrero commented yesterday that Marianas High School teacher James Yangetmai has the prerogative to question the results of the recently concluded Teacher Representative election, which the Association of Commonwealth Teacher candidate lost to Kagman High School teacher



Guerrero

Ambrose Bennett. “Anyone [who] is running can always question [the election result]. I think they [administration] need to ensure whether he has valid points or not. If it’s not valid, then at least you settle the issue. And there’s no cloud hanging over the whole process. “It’s a democratic process. People who lose sometimes ask or think there are discrepancies or procedures [that were] not followed. If that is the case then the people that are conducting the election needs to refute them and say that this is what we did, and this the process and the procedures,” said the official, who recently lost the BOE chairmanship to Roman Benavente. Yangetmai, who lagged behind Bennett by 16 votes in Monday’s poll, hinted of possible vote manipulation, casting

doubts on the election’s credibility. ACT claimed the process was not valid and fair, as it allegedly lacked transparency. The group raised the absence of its own representative at the polling center. “I guess in any election, there’s a need to be clear on the process and procedures. If the one who lost is questioning the validity of the election then perhaps they need to revisit [the issue] and make sure there’s no doubt that what they certified is true and correct. The process has to be followed and it has to be transparent so nobody can question it,” insisted Guerrero, who called on House legislators yesterday. The BOE member representing Saipan was also curious over the dismal turnout in Monday’s election.

“When you only have 28 percent [of] eligible voters voting, that’s an extremely low turnout. With this kind of turnout, there’s no clear mandate from the teachers. So it’s questionable. One can raise the question why you don’t have many who voted? There’s a lot of questions why,” he asserted. Gov. Juan N. Babauta proclaimed Bennett’s victory on Tuesday, a day after the Teacher Representative poll was held here Monday and simultaneously on Rota and Tinian. The chief executive stressed that teacher representation in the BOE is constitutionally mandated. He said that concerns raised over the selection has prompted his office to hold the election so that all public school teachers in the CNMI could choose a representative that would truly represent them.

Babauta credited the Public School System, the BOE, the

PSS legal counsel, the Attorney General’s Office and the administration for putting together a fair and objective selection process. Of the 500 full-time teachers who were eligible to vote, Babauta confirmed that only 142 teachers or 28 percent cast their votes. He lamented the minimal participation. According to the breakdown, Yangetmai garnered 62 votes while Bennett gained 78 votes. Two ballots were reportedly cast without votes. Babauta explained that only full time teachers were eligible to vote in this election, quoting PSS’ definition of full time teachers as any person who is employed by the Public School System and has the primary responsibility for the education, instruction or provides related services for one or more students. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

Paras signs payment schedule with CHC

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Paras Enterprises president Juan T. Guerrero has signed a payment schedule agreement with the Department of Public Health only last week. Earlier, Paras legal counsel Mark Smith clarified that no agreement had been reached yet as of Jan. 8 as previously agreed by both parties. Guerrero said yesterday that Paras signed the payment schedule only last Jan. 14. On January 16, he said Paras received an additional \$100,000 payment from DPH. Based on the schedule, the department will give another payment of \$80,000 to Paras on Jan. 30 and some \$50,000 on Feb. 13. Guerrero said Paras and DPH continue to negotiate for the \$50,000 billing. “We have submitted our billing for \$50,000. I don’t know why they’re disputing our billing now when in the last six years,

they never did,” said Guerrero. He said Paras submitted \$248,000 billing to DPH as of Jan. 7, 2004. Based on the schedule, the DPH only acknowledged some \$230,000. “There is some flexibility but we’ll still pursue what is really due us,” said Guerrero, adding that the department itself is charging Paras some \$11,000 for outstanding hospital bills. This amount would be assessed against the last payment to Paras. “We’ll settle that but I’m not really sure how much we owe them so we have to discuss that,” he said. Guerrero also clarified that he has not signed any expiration transfer agreement with the department, which would “legalize” the transfer of Paras employees to the Commonwealth Health Center. Some authorities, however, said that a consensual transfer agreement with Paras is no longer needed

since its contracts with employees provide that their termination of employment goes with Paras’ contract termination with CHC. Both parties have agreed to finalize their payment schedule in view of the DPH’ shift to direct hiring of nursing staff effective Jan. 1, 2004. Paras and other agencies’ contracts with CHC ended on Dec. 31, 2003 but transfer negotiations dragged along pending the settlement of the government’s debt with the companies and the lack of funded FTEs or positions at the department. On Jan. 2, Finance released \$100,000 each to Paras and Saipan Employment Agency Services as partial payment. The government terminated its contracts with agencies on the belief that direct hiring would result in better delivery of health care and boost employee morale. The direct hiring aims to implement a uniform pay for all nursing staff.

DEQ heightens illegal dumping campaign

The Division of Environmental Quality warned that it would impose a fine on anyone caught illegally dumping trash on the islands. DEQ director John I. Castro Jr. urged the public to respect the no littering signs the agency has installed at beach parks and other areas. “We will assess a fine. Our regulations allow us to impose up to \$25,000 per day of violation,” Castro said. The DEQ hopes that the move will deter the public from illegally disposing of trash and household wastes. Castro said trash should be disposed of at the Lower Base

Refuse Transfer Station or the Marpi landfill. “Help us. It’s not just the DEQ’s job to keep Saipan beautiful but it’s also the public’s responsibility,” Castro added. The Environmental Inter-agency Cleanup Operation Team, of which DEQ is a member, and volunteers from non-profit group MOVER recently conducted an emergency cleanup in Garapan’s Makaka beach site, which had deteriorated due to illegal dumping. According to EICOT chairman Benny Pangelinan, people just ignored the DEQ’s no-littering sign at the site. *(John Ravelo)*

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Opinion

Saipan Tribune

CNM'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XIII, Issue No. 352

Published daily at 2/F Century Insurance Building,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

John Pangelinan PUBLISHER
Aldwin R. Fajardo EDITOR
Jayvee L. Vallejera ASSISTANT EDITOR

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

3 men arrested for alleged assault

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Authorities arrested Monday night three men who have been a subject of intensive investigations by law enforcers since November 2003 when a 43-year-old man lodged a complaint against them.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said Martin F. Borja, 38; Chris W. Taimanglo, 20; and William M. Faisao, 19, were arrested based on the arrest warrants issued against them by Judge Juan Lizama.

Blas said COPPS officers Jesse Seman and Sandy Hambros arrested the three suspects in connection with a Nov. 16, 2003, assault case lodged by Saburo Stewart, 43.

Lizama issued the warrants after the police released the results of its investigation on the case. The officers immediately served the warrants to the suspects. All three were brought to the Adult Correctional facility in Susupe where they were booked and detained pending bail hearing.

The investigation report showed that the police department received a call for assistance around 1:28am of Nov. 16, 2003, due to a disturbance in the house of Stewart in Kagman III area. Medics were also dispatched due to injuries sustained by the victim.

According to the report, the victim and two of the three suspects were involved in a fight outside the victim's house. During the squabble, the suspects used rocks, a machete, and a baseball bat to allegedly attack the victim, causing serious injuries.

Stewart reportedly sustained lacerations on the back, legs, and arms, as well as other cuts and bruises on his body.

After the investigation, probers determined the culpability of the three suspects and asked that arrest warrants be issued against them.

The suspects are now facing disturbing the peace, assault and battery, assault with dangerous weapons, and criminal mischief charges.

Taiwanese boat seized off New Caledonia

A Taiwanese fishing boat has been intercepted south of New Caledonia for fishing illegally.

The French high commission in the New Caledonia capitol of Noumea says the ship had been spotted by a French surveillance aircraft and an inspection showed it carried dozens of tons of fresh and frozen fish.

The interception comes just days after the captain of another Taiwanese fishing boat was jailed for six months and fined almost US\$200,000 for fishing illegally. (RNZI/PIR)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

Saipan Southern High School students gather around Gov. Juan N. Babauta during the chief executive's recent visit at the campus, in line with the administration's education program. Babauta has been putting emphasis on public education as an important tool in the eventual recovery of the local economy.

MPLA board in limbo due to lack of quorum

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The lack of a quorum on the Board of Directors of the Marianas Public Lands Authority is stymieing efforts to move ahead on critical projects, including 36 new offers for land compensation that require the board's approval.

Only two members remain on the Board—chairperson, Ana Demapan-Castro and vice chairman Manny Villagomez—following the resignation of a member and term expiration of another.

Member Pedro M. Atalig resigned from the board effective Jan. 1, 2004, while member

Pedro Igitol's term expired on Dec. 31, 2003.

The board is composed of five seats, with one representative each from Tinian and Rota and three from Saipan. The CNMI Constitution also provides that one of the directors should be of Carolinian descent, while another should represent women.

At the moment, Demapan-Castro represents Saipan and the women's sector, while Villagomez represents Tinian. This means nobody is representing Rota, the Carolinians, and two seats for Saipan.

This, even as the MPLA has already readied 36 new offers for land compensation that re-

quire the board's approval.

"We have to get the board's approval before we can make the offer but the board can't possibly meet right now for lack of quorum," said MPLA commissioner Henry S. Hofschneider.

The board normally holds a regular meeting on the third Thursday of the month.

Hofschneider said that some names have been floated for appointment by the governor to the board. He declined to identify them.

Meantime, he said that 38 landowners have accepted the MPLA's initial offers and are like likely to get their compensation within the month.

"Once Finance puts the

money in MPLA's special account, we can start cutting checks," he said.

Hofschneider said that MPLA is offering "just and fair" compensation to landowners.

The MPLA board approved 75 folders for immediate land compensation last month. This came soon after the CNMI government floated a \$40-million bond, with the proceeds to be used primarily to settle the longstanding land claims by individuals against the government. The first batch of claims included acquisition of rights-of-way.

The Land Compensation Act mandates the government to prioritize the payment for lands used for rights-of-way,

then ponding basins, and later wetlands and other claims.

The payment to landowners is based on the valuation at the time of taking by the Commonwealth.

The MPLA has listed some 120 eligible land claimants in the CNMI.

Of the \$40-million bond, only about \$27 million will be used for land compensation, as \$11 million has been allotted to fund a pending prison project. The bond's Hawaii-based underwriter also deducted \$1.5 million from the total amount for cost of the bond issuance.

The government is given 30 years to pay off the loan at an annual interest of 6.75 percent.

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Business

Hotels look to bedding to improve profits

By BRAD FOSS
AP BUSINESS WRITER

For hotel companies trying to fluff up profits, it's become all about the bed.

This week, it's Hampton Inn's turn. The mid-priced hotel chain based in Memphis, Tenn., is announcing an \$80 million make-over Wednesday that promotes the purchase of higher quality mattresses, pillows, comforters and sheets.

Hampton Inn, owned by Hilton Hotels Corp., wants to lavish budget-conscious travelers with a taste of what they'd find at more expensive hotels. Its vision borrows heavily from the success that Westin Hotels and Resorts, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co. and other higher-end brands have had in recent years marketing the luxuriousness of their bedding.

"Those guys are in a different league," concedes Phil Cordell, Hampton Inn's senior vice president of brand management.

Still, the softer sheets, thicker comforters, extra pillow and raised headboards visitors will find at all 1,250 Hampton Inn and Hampton Inn & Suites locations by 2005 is "something they couldn't get at another hotel specifically within our price point," Cordell said. Hampton Inn's mid-market rivals include Fairfield

Inn, Holiday Inn Express and Country Inn and Suites.

The Hampton Inn redesign coincides with the brand's 20th anniversary and comes at a time when fierce price competition has made it harder for hoteliers to maintain distinct brand identities. Moreover, the growing popularity of Internet travel sites threatens brand differentiation because as shoppers hunt for the cheapest rate they effectively treat hotel rooms like a commodity.

Pampering guests with fancy bedding is hardly new for upscale brands. But in the past five years it has become a more overt component of marketing and advertising campaigns, particularly for Westin, which is owned by Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide Inc., of White Plains, N.Y.

In fact, Westin single-handedly launched the bedding craze in August 1999, when it introduced its "Heavenly Bed" concept at 23 properties owned by the parent company. The underlying idea was to get "away from institutional commoditization" and give guests amenities they'd "really want to have in their own homes," said Sue Brush, the company's senior vice president of branding.

As the new look was rolled out by franchisees nationwide,

Westin began receiving phone calls from customers who were interested in ordering Westin's custom-designed mattresses for their own homes.

Westin executives quickly worked out a deal with manufacturers, set up a toll-free customer service line and by the end of 2000 had sold \$900,000 worth of "Heavenly" bedding,

including pillowtop mattresses, goose-down pillows and 250 thread-count sheets. Last year, sales totaled \$4.9 million and Westin is currently designing "Heavenly Bed 2."

Moreover, Brush said that as customer satisfaction rose Westin was able to raise room rates.

The experience taught the entire industry "that a good night's

sleep is something that people value almost as much as a clean room," Ritz-Carlton spokeswoman Vivian Deuschl said.

"But, I don't think any of us expected that people wanted to shell out that kind of money for beds," Deuschl said. Ritz-Carlton sells its own Sealy Corp.-designed king-sized mattresses for \$1,499 and in the past year

has sold "way over \$1 million" worth of bedding products, Deuschl said.

Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, a closer competitor to Westin, responded to the success of the "Heavenly Bed" campaign by purchasing "fancier" duvets and featherbeds and adding "a lot" of throw pillows, said spokeswoman Angela Sell.

Amazon.com reports sharply higher profits

By ALLISON LINN
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Amazon.com Inc. on Tuesday reported sharply higher profits in its fourth quarter, boosted by holiday sales and favorable currency exchange rates. The company also posted its first annual profit.

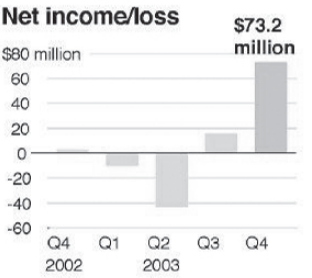
The Internet retailing giant said net income for the quarter ended Dec. 31 was \$73.2 million or 17 cents per share, far better than the \$2.7 million or 1 cent per share in the fourth quarter of 2002. The results for the three-month period included a \$4 million benefit for favorable foreign currency exchange rates on debt that the company holds in euros. The euro rose sharply against the dollar in the final three months of 2003.

Sales for the three-month period were nearly \$1.95 billion, up 36 percent from \$1.43 billion a year earlier.

For the most recent quarter, the company said its net sales were helped by \$98 million from fluctuations in foreign currency rates, as compared to the same period a year earlier. Without that benefit, sales would have increased 29

Amazon swings a profit

Internet retailing giant Amazon.com reported a fourth-quarter profit significantly higher than the \$2.7 million reported in the year-ago period.



SOURCE: The company AP

percent, chief financial officer Tom Szkutak said.

Amazon.com chief executive Jeff Bezos said the company and customers also benefited from year-round free shipping options and discount pricing.

The company said pro forma net income, which excludes certain items, was \$125 million or 29 cents per share, meeting the expectations of analysts polled by Thomson First Call. That compares with pro forma net income of \$75 million or 19 cents per share in the fourth quarter of 2002.

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Consumer confidence rises in January

By ADAM GELLER
AP BUSINESS WRITER

A closely watched gauge of consumer sentiment rose in January, with Americans' increasing confidence in the economy tempered only by doubts about jobs, an industry group reported Tuesday.

The Conference Board said its consumer confidence index rose to 96.8, the highest level since mid-2002, following a dip in December to a revised reading of 91.7.

The rise in the index, while sizable, was smaller than the expectations of analysts, who had forecast a reading of 99.0. The index was last this high in July 2002 when it reached 97.4.

"Growing optimism about the overall health of the economy continues to bolster consumers' short-term outlook," said Lynn Franco, research director for the New York-based group. "But

consumers' assessment of current conditions, which strongly hinges on improvements in the labor market, remains both weak and volatile."

The confidence reading is followed closely because consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of the economy. Consumers who feel more upbeat about the economy are likely to spend more, while those who remain pessimistic may curb their purchases.

Analysts called the January rise in the confidence measure encouraging, showing consumers see substantial evidence of economic improvement.

"They know things are getting better. They see it all around them," said Joel Naroff of Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pa. "Jobs are becoming more plentiful, but they're not as plentiful as they'd like them to be. That's the only thing at issue here."

The result is a gulf between consumer perceptions of the present and the future. That is not unusual, but is more typical of turning points in the economy rather than the current state, where most measures show an economy that is expanding robustly, Naroff said.

The Conference Board's monthly index reflects consumer perceptions of the current economy as well as their outlook for the next six months.

In January, a sub-index measuring consumers' assessment of current conditions rose to 80.0 from 74.3 in December. Those describing the present business climate as good rose to 22.0 percent, up from 18.6 percent in the previous month.

But that was tempered by lingering doubts about jobs. Those who said jobs are hard to get declined to 31.4 percent from 32.4 percent. But the number who

Consumer confidence

Here is a look at the Consumer Confidence Index from a survey of 5,000 U.S. households.

Seasonally adjusted, 1985=100



SOURCE: The Conference Board AP

said jobs are plentiful slipped to 12.4 percent from 12.6 percent.

At the same time, Americans are increasingly optimistic in their expectations for the economy over the next six months. The gauge measuring outlook

rose to 108.1 in January, up from 103.3 in December.

Those who say business conditions are likely to improve in the next half year rose to 27.8 percent from 26.7 percent. The number who expect conditions to worsen declined to 6.5 percent from 8.1 percent.

The outlook on the job market also improved, with those who expect more jobs in the next six months rising to 22.2 percent from 21.6 percent in December.

However, the number of consumers who expect that their own incomes will increase declined to 18.9 percent from 21.5 percent.

Stocks closed lower following the release of the report. The Dow Jones industrial average finished the day down 92.59 to 10,609.92. The Nasdaq composite index lost 37.79 to close at 2,116.04. The Standard & Poor's 500 index finished 11.32 points lower to 1,144.05.

McDonald's gains at Burger King's expense

By DAVE CARPENTER
AP BUSINESS WRITER

Is McDonald's going for Burger King's jugular? Executives of the world's largest restaurant chain laughed Tuesday when an analyst asked them that question about their struggling fast-food rival—and didn't deny it.

McDonald's widened the gap on runner-up Burger King with a turnaround year in 2003 that saw it boost U.S. sales sharply through new products, extended hours, a high-powered ad campaign and the slowing of its rapid expansion pace.

The No. 2 burger-seller, meanwhile, has had lackluster results. Burger King's same-store U.S. sales, measuring performance at established restaurants, fell 4.4 percent in the second half of 2003 after overall sales declined nearly 2 percent to \$11.1 billion in the fiscal year ended June 30.

"With respect to the major competitor, you know it's in our blood here," Charlie Bell, McDonald's president and chief operating officer, said on the conference call, without naming Burger King.

In a telling anecdote about the founder of the Oak Brook, Ill.-based chain, he added: "Ray Kroc once said, 'If you see a competitor drowning, you stick a hose down their throat.'"

"We do know the one that you're talking about is vulnerable. And we're going to work hard to make us continually successful, and they'll have to play catch-up," Bell said.

CEO Jim Cantalupo, who has been with the company for more than half its 49-year history, said McDonald's strategy is not about one competitor; rather, it's about "all of them." But he acknowledged that market share—where Burger King has remained a distant No.



Lunch-hour customers leave a McDonald's restaurant in downtown Chicago in this March 12, 2003, file photo. A year removed from its worst financial quarter ever, McDonald's Corp. is expected to show solid results when fourth-quarter earnings are released.

2—is the driving focus.

"You've heard me say before, 'I don't like to talk about market share because we don't want to share anything,'" Cantalupo told the analysts.

A Burger King spokesman did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment.

McDonald's and Burger King have been going burger to burger for more than 30 years, with Wendy's and smaller companies also fighting for consumers' hearts and appetites. But the stakes of their battle have intensified recently as the U.S. fast-food market becomes

increasingly saturated, casual-dining eateries take away business and Americans opt for healthier diets.

A price war between the two that stepped up in 2002 weakened profits and produced only mixed results, with Wendy's steering clear and picking up steady gains.

Dow ends down 93, Nasdaq drops 38

Investors intent on preserving profits looked past positive earnings reports Tuesday and sent stocks sharply lower. Technology stocks saw steep declines on a disappointing outlook from chip maker Novellus Systems Inc.

After the previous session's rally, when the Dow Jones industrial average reached its highest level in 31 months, not even solid results from five blue chip companies could stop the declines. A consumer confidence reading that missed expectations and jitters about the Federal Reserve's expected statement on interest rates Wednesday contributed to the decline.

Still, with results from most companies beating Wall Street's forecasts, most traders and analysts remained optimistic about the long term.

The Dow closed down 92.59, or 0.9 percent, at 10,609.92.

The broader gauges also closed lower. The Nasdaq composite index closed down 37.79, or 1.8 percent, at 2,116.04. The Standard & Poor's 500 index closed down 11.32, or 1 percent, at 1,144.05.

Decliners outnumbered advancers about 4 to 3 on the New York Stock Exchange. Volume was at 1.63 billion shares, compared to 1.45 billion shares traded on Monday.

The Russell 2000 index, which tracks smaller company stocks, was down 6.33, or 1 percent, at 595.17.

Overseas, Japan's Nikkei stock average finished 0.4 percent lower Tuesday. In afternoon trading in Europe, France's CAC-40 closed up 0.6 percent, Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.3 percent and Germany's DAX index finished 0.1 percent higher. (AP)

STOCK

ASIAN MARKETS

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

ASIA PACIFIC

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW

10,609.92

-92.59

NASDAQ

2,116.04

-37.79

S&P

1,144.05

-11.32

INDUSTRY MARKET

Automotive

1.2%

Banking

0.5%

Chemicals

1.2%

Energy

0.8%

Food

0.1%

Healthcare

1.0%

Technology

1.5%

Telecom

0.3%

Transportation

0.2%

Utilities

0.4%

Other

0.1%





World

Life & Style

'Rings' pulls in 11 Oscar nominations

By DAVID GERMAIN
AP MOVIE WRITER

Middle-earth crowned its monarch. Now, Academy Awards voters seem ready to crown "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" as the first fantasy to win best picture. The final chapter of Peter Jackson's trilogy, based on J.R.R. Tolkien's classic set in an imaginary world of hobbits, wizards and elves, took a leading 11 Oscar nominations Tuesday, among them best picture and director.

Key acting nominees included Golden Globe winners Bill Murray as a washed-up actor in "Lost in Translation," Diane Keaton as a down-on-love playwright in "Something's Gotta Give," Charlize Theron as serial killer Aileen Wuornos in "Monster" and Sean Penn as a vengeful father in "Mystic River."

The Napoleonic era naval adventure "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World" received 10 nominations, including best picture and director for Peter Weir.

The other best-picture nominees were the quirky Tokyo tale "Lost in Translation," the somber vengeance story "Mystic River" and the uplifting horse-racing drama "Seabiscuit."

The most notable snubs were for the Civil War saga "Cold Mountain," which failed to get nominations for best picture, director Anthony Minghella or lead actress Nicole Kidman, last year's best-actress winner for "The Hours." The film had scored well in earlier movie honors.

The biggest surprise was 13-year-old Keisha Castle-Hughes. For her performance as a Maori girl bucking tribal tradition in "Whale Rider," she became the youngest person ever to be nominated for lead actress.

Another surprise pick was director Fernando Meirelles for the Brazilian film "City of God."

"Lost in Translation" earned nominations for directing and original screenplay for Sofia Coppola. She was only the third woman ever nominated for director, after Lina Wertmüller for 1976's "Seven Beauties" and Jane Campion for 1993's "The Piano."

"It's pretty unbelievable. I'm happy to be in good company," said Coppola, the daughter of Francis Ford Coppola and the first American woman nominated for director.

A win for Coppola would make her kin the second family of three-generation winners, joining Walter, John and Anjelica Huston. Coppola's father is a five-time winner and her grandfather, Carmine Coppola, won for musical score on "The Godfather Part II."

Besides best picture and director, nominations for "Return of the King" included original score and song, visual effects, film editing and adapted screenplay. The film was shut out in acting categories, though.

With their strange creatures and

mythical settings, fantasy flicks have had a hard time gaining favor with Oscar voters. No such fantastical film has ever won the top Oscar, yet universal acclaim and success at previous awards have positioned "Return of the King" to break that barrier.

"Obviously, we've got reason to hope that happens," said Jackson, also considered the favorite for the directing Oscar. "I think what's helping us with 'The Lord of the Rings' is that people respond to the performances, to the reality of the situations on screen and the depth of it. It feels real to them."

"So it's not really the fantasy that's dominant in the film. It's the human emotion. The design of a lot of fantasy films can alienate audiences. We're trying to do the opposite and make people feel comfortable in that world as something they can recognize."

The exclusion of "Cold Mountain" from the top category ended distributor Miramax's 11-year streak of fielding at least one best-picture contender, including last year's winner "Chicago."

Miramax co-founder Harvey Weinstein, considered Hollywood's scrappiest Oscar campaigner, said "Cold Mountain" was hurt by a shorter awards season this year. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences moved the Oscars to Feb. 29, three weeks earlier than usual.

"Cold Mountain" did manage to pick up seven nominations, though, among them best actor for Jude Law as a Confederate deserter and supporting actress for Renee Zellweger as a salt-of-the-earth Southerner. It was Zellweger's third straight nomination.

Along with Law, Penn and Murray, best-actor nominees were Johnny Depp as a wily buccaneer in "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" and Ben Kingsley as an Iranian immigrant in "House of Sand and Fog."

Murray is the latest in a string of actors such as Tom Hanks and Robin Williams who earned hard-won respect after a career that began in broad comedy. Academy voters had snubbed Murray for one of 1998's most acclaimed performances in "Rushmore."

Joining Keaton, Castle-Hughes and Theron in the best-actress category were Samantha Morton as an Irish mom in New York in "In America," and Naomi Watts as a grieving mother in "21 Grams."

It was the fourth nomination for Keaton, a best-actress winner for 1977's "Annie Hall." Keaton plays an older woman who has closed the door on love, then finds herself pursued by two men in "Something's Gotta Give," which has topped \$100 million at the box office.

"It's fantastic for actresses of my generation," Keaton said. "It means we can still be in romantic comedies, and if they're well-written and directed and acted, it works and it makes money."



The nominees for best director in the 76th annual Academy Awards, announced Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2004, in Beverly Hills, Calif., are, from left: Peter Jackson, "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King"; Peter Weir, "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World"; Sofia Coppola, "Lost in Translation"; Clint Eastwood, "Mystic River" and Fernando Meirelles, "City of God."



Actor Elijah Wood, as Frodo, is shown in a scene from New Line Cinema's "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," in this undated promotional photo.

Academy officials take extra precautions

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—The two copy repairmen contaminated themselves by getting off an elevator on the wrong floor. They would have to be questioned—and possibly quarantined.

What could they have picked up by walking onto the busy fifth floor, instead of the deserted sixth, at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences headquarters?

Details about the movie industry's biggest secrets—the Oscar nominations—eight hours before actress Sigourney Weaver would read them to the world.

Learning that Johnny Depp had hooked a lead actor nomination for "Pirates of the Caribbean," or that "The Lord of the Rings" ruled with a leading 11 bids, would have required the repairmen to remain in the locked-down building until the next morning—with no way to call home.

"I'm declaring them 'dirty,'" Academy media coordinator Leslie Unger told security through her walkie talkie.

But around 11 p.m., they lucked out. Academy officials determined the copy guys knew nothing, so they were free to go.

Although she was overruled, Unger seemed satisfied. "I guess someone determined that they were clean," she said.

Meanwhile, the mood overnight on the secluded fifth floor was festive. Fueled by coffee and adrenaline, it combined the sleep-deprived giddiness of a slumber party with the intensity of a college cram session.

"If you work here, this is almost as good as it gets," said Bruce Davis, the Academy's executive director. "For a couple of hours, you know stuff that nobody else in the world knows—and it's fun stuff to know."

The evening got rolling around 9 p.m. when dark-suited accountants from PricewaterhouseCoopers arrived and made their way through security—guards at every entrance and inside every elevator.

The accountants turned over the voting results to Davis and his crew, who then raced to prepare Web sites, assemble press kits and set up the live telecast for the 5:38 a.m. announcements from the building's second-floor theater.

But first there was about 15 min-

utes to satisfy personal curiosity.

Tech workers, publicists, archivists and Academy executives all grabbed for the box of papers detailing the contenders. It was like the Oscar version of Christmas morning, with lots of rustling paper followed by oohs, ahhs and a few groans.

Even Oscar people like to second-guess the Oscars.

"These people all love movies," said Davis. "They have favorites they're rooting for, and there are surprises you just didn't see coming."

Davis spent much of the evening in a skull session assembling trivia about nominees, bouncing ideas around a group that included awards coordinator Patrick Stockstill and executive administrator Ric Robertson.

About 4 a.m., Weaver, a three-time Oscar nominee, arrived to prepare for her presentation.

The actress and co-presenter Frank Pierson, the Academy's president, rehearsed in a private meeting room, debating whether "Monster" lead actress Charlize Theron pronounced her last name 'There-unn' or 'Thurron.' (They settled on the former.)

Novel about autistic boy wins UK prize



The 2003 Whitbread Book of the Year Award winner, Mark Haddon, for his book "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time", embraces his wife Sos Eltis, after the announcement of his win, in London, Tuesday Jan. 27, 2004.

LONDON (AP)—A best-selling novel about an autistic 15-year-old boy won Britain's Whitbread Book of the Year award on Tuesday.

"The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-time," by Mark Haddon, tells the story of a teenager with a form of autism called Asperger's syndrome.

"We see through the boy the chaos of the adult world around him," said Joan Bakewell, the chair of the judging panel. "One of the judges said the

book used disability to throw a light upon the world."

The novel was entered in the Whitbread's adult novel category, but was published simultaneously as a work of children's and adult fiction.

Haddon was awarded a \$45,500 prize for his work.

Haddon had already won the Whitbread Novel of the Year award. Tuesday's award was as overall winner, defeating books in four other categories.

"Landing Light" by Don Pat-

erson had won for poetry, "The Fire-Eaters" by David Almond had won for children's books, "Orwell: The Life" by D.J. Taylor had won for biography, and "Vernon God Little" by D.B.C Pierre had won the first novel prize.

The annual Whitbread Book Awards were established in 1971 and are Britain's longest-running literary competition. They are open to residents of Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Court sets trial date for Madonna case

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A lawsuit alleging that Madonna and her director-husband, Guy Ritchie, stole the idea for the 2002 film remake of "Swept Away" will go to court May 4.

In the suit, self-described singer, songwriter, director and actor Vincent D'Onofrio alleges Madonna and Ritchie took his idea for a remake of the 1975 Italian comedy and then cut him out of the credits and compensation.

The movie, directed by Ritchie, stars Madonna as a wealthy woman stranded on a desert island with a sailor. It bombed at the box office and was panned by critics.

D'Onofrio sued Madonna, Ritchie and Sony Pictures in Superior Court in October 2002, claiming he pitched the idea to Madonna in April 1997 and had several meetings with her and Ritchie.

Attorneys for Madonna and Ritchie have said D'Onofrio does not have proof of a contract with the female singer or Sony.

D'Onofrio's attorney said he would seek \$10 million in damages.

D'Onofrio is not the actor of

the same name who portrays Detective Bobby Goren on NBC's "Law & Order: Criminal Intent."

NJ firm offers slices of Elvis recording

NEW YORK (AP)—A New Jersey company is offering Elvis Presley fans a chance to buy what it says is a slice of history.

And it really means a slice—2-inch snips of a tape reel featuring some of the King's earliest recordings.

"This is a piece of the history," said Tony Bongiovi, an engineer and record producer involved with trying to authenticate the reel. "Here's a chance to get something that nobody has."

At a news conference at a recording studio in Manhattan on Tuesday, Michael Esposito, president of Bloomfield, N.J.-based Master Tape Collection, showed reporters and guests the reel of tape, which was purchased at an auction in Tennessee in 1992. He cut off a 2-inch section, meant to be put in a plaque and presented to Presley's estate.

On the reel are recordings of the first songs a then-unknown Presley put together in a studio in the early 1950s. They're known as the "Sun Sessions," a series of songs released by Sun records before Presley moved to a major label.

The reel is in bad condition and could barely be played.

Copies have been made of what was recorded on it. Bongiovi said he doubted the original could be heard again without falling apart.

"Within the next 10 years, no matter what kind of technology is available, this tape will never, ever be able to be played," he said.

Faced with that deterioration, Esposito decided to offer it to Presley fans. Those who are willing to pay \$495 can get a 2-inch cutting of the tape preserved in a plaque. The tape had not been unspooled to determine how many cuttings could be made.

Elvis Presley Enterprises has given a license to the project.

Esposito said cuttings would be made only in response to the demand from fans and each piece would be notarized and registered.

The songs have all been released, and RCA Records, which controls all Presley recordings, says it has the existing original tapes of those sessions and won't comment further. But Esposito says his reel is a master, perhaps one of nine that were supposed to have been destroyed in the late 1950s.

After his company, which looks for master tapes from



Tony Bongiovi and Michael Esposito cut a two inch segment of the original 1954-55 Sun Sessions master recording made by Elvis Presley, during a news conference Tuesday Jan. 27, 2004, in New York.

artists to reissue their music, got the reel and realized what it could be, it tried to have it authenticated by Sam Phil-

lips, the producer of the Sun sessions. But Phillips died without looking at it, and the task fell to Bongiovi.

Jackson accuser's dad asks to visit

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The estranged father of Michael Jackson's accuser asked a court Tuesday to allow him supervised visits with the child, saying he's concerned by reports the boy is seriously ill.

The father, who pleaded no contest to child cruelty in 2002 and spousal abuse in 2001, has

been barred from seeing his two sons and a daughter for two years. The boy's mother filed for divorce in 2001.

The man's attorney, Russell Halpern, said visitation should be granted, noting that the father has completed classes in parenting and anger management. The request was expect-

ed to be taken up Wednesday in Superior Court.

Michael Manning, the mother's divorce attorney, declined comment.

Jackson has pleaded innocent to seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts on a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent.

Jamie Masada, a Hollywood club owner who runs a camp for underprivileged children and helped arrange the boy's introduction to Jackson, said last week the boy's condition appears to have improved lately. Masada had said in November the child, who lost a kidney to cancer, was "not doing very good."

Jerry Lewis home after rehab stint

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Comedian Jerry Lewis has returned home from a rehabilitation center several weeks early, after overcoming a steroid dependence and shedding more than 50 pounds, his publicist said Tuesday.

"He looks fabulous. His face is back to being the regular Jerry Lewis," said Candi Cazau, spokeswoman for Lewis and The Orleans hotel-casino in Las Vegas. "When you see the before and after pictures, it's incredible."

Lewis, who turns 78 in March, was focusing on a strict diet and exercise program and was planning a March 3 performance at The Orleans, Cazau said.

The comedian signed a 20-year contract with the off-Strip hotel-casino shortly before being diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis. He last appeared on stage at The Orleans in April 2001.

In September, Lewis appeared bloated and puffy during the 38th annual Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon, which raised a record \$60.5 million for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

The Dead gets temporary new band member

NEW YORK (AP)—The Dead is getting a new member, albeit temporarily.

Gov't Mule's Warren Haynes will perform with The Dead as the band heads out on the road this summer. The guitarist, whose band toured with The Dead in 2002, will begin performing with the band next month, including a performance at the Dead's Second Annual Winter Jam in San Francisco on Feb. 9.

In a statement, Haynes said "getting to sing some of the Hunter/Garcia songs will be a real honor."

"Every time you play with different players it changes from listening to the musicians on stage," said Haynes, who will be handling vocals and guitar for the band. "Playing with three guitar players will be more sensitive. It's a challenge I am very much looking forward to."

Haynes hasn't left behind his own band, however. The group, which is starting a tour with Kid Rock, is working on a new studio album.



Rockstar Courtney Love winks during a progress hearing on charges she illegally possessed painkillers, in a courtroom in Beverly Hills, Calif., Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2004, in this photo of a television screen showing video footage from court.

Courtney Love's hearing postponed

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—A court hearing for singer/actress Courtney Love, who faces two felony counts of possession of a controlled substance, was postponed Tuesday after the judge said "additional investigation" was needed before the case could proceed.

Love met privately with Superior Court Judge Elden S. Fox for eight minutes before her brief court appearance. Fox said her hearing would be delayed until Feb. 11 because of "certain issues as it relates to an investigation on this matter."

It was the second time the hearing was delayed.

Love, 39, has pleaded innocent to charges of illegal possession of two painkillers, hydrocodone and oxycodone. Authorities say the painkillers were discovered after she was taken to a hospital on Oct. 2.

Police said they found the singer-actress outside an ex-boyfriend's house, where she had allegedly broken the windows that day.

She is charged separately with a misdemeanor for allegedly being under the influence of a narcotic.

After the hearing, a pack of paparazzi followed Love out of the courtroom and into the street, where one person tripped but was apparently unhurt.

Before leaving, she told reporters she is planning a tour in support of her solo album "America's Sweetheart," scheduled for release in February.

The widow of Nirvana lead singer Kurt Cobain, Love was the lead singer for the rock group Hole and has appeared in such movies as "The People vs. Larry Flynt" and "Man on the Moon."

Singer Isaac Hayes receives Trumpet award

ATLANTA (AP)—Singer and composer Isaac Hayes was among those honored at the 12th Annual Trumpet Awards, which recog-

nize achievement by blacks in politics, business, law and the arts.

Hayes, who won an Oscar for his theme song from the 1971 movie "Shaft," received an award Monday night for past accomplishments. The awards are sponsored by Turner Broadcasting System Inc.

"Isaac's music not only made

the difference in that movie, it made a difference throughout the film industry where scores are concerned," said actor Rich-

ard Roundtree, who starred in the original "Shaft" and presented Hayes with his Trumpet.

A crowd estimated at 1,500 attended the black-tie affair. With the exception of former South African

President Nelson Mandela, all of this year's honorees appeared in person to accept their awards.



Hayes

Sad vision of her future stirs woman to make changes now

By AVIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I sympathize with "Waiting in Wisconsin," whose boyfriend promised her an engagement ring three years ago. Six months ago, I broke up with my boyfriend. We had lived together for four years and everyone assumed we would marry.

I needed to take the next step in our relationship. We discussed it, and he told me he was not ready and might not be for several more years—if then. I agonized about it for several months. Then one day, I envisioned myself five years down the road in the same situation—together but no closer to marriage. I broke down and cried.

It was then that I finally accepted what I already knew in my heart. If he wasn't ready in five years, he might never be. I moved out.

Upon reflection, I think part of the reason I needed the commitment was that I wasn't sure of his love for me. I also believe that he wasn't ready to get married because he wasn't convinced that our relationship was the best for him.

Your advice to "Waiting" was absolutely right. She should move on and waste no more time. I am now in a relationship that is more satisfying than I ever thought possible. Leaving that previous relationship was the hardest thing I ever had to do, but the best decision I've ever made because I listened to my heart.

DID THE RIGHT THING, SANTA CLARA, CALIF.

DEAR D.T.R.T.: Making the decision to move on isn't easy. Sometimes admitting to ourselves that what we want may not be what the good Lord has planned for us can be painful. However, the most precious commodity we have is time. I'm pleased you didn't waste any more than you did.

Read on:

DEAR ABBY: For three years, the man I thought would be the father of my children talked about marriage. He would call me and say, "Start planning the wedding," and I'd be overjoyed. Then he'd say, "We'll do it after () ." (He had a million excuses.)

The last straw was when he served in Iraq. We were rocky before he left. I stood by him and cried and waited for him to return home. The day he left Iraq, he called to say he had already asked his best friend to be our best man, and we'd be engaged before his discharge from the Army—in two months' time.

Well, he got back. He got his discharge and moved to Texas—and still no ring. I decided I'd had enough. Instead of getting my ring finger, he got another one.

I have never been happier. Please tell "Waiting" that the sooner she lets this loser go, the sooner she'll find a real man.

NO MORE DRAMA IN GEORGIA

DEAR NO MORE DRAMA: They say a gesture is worth a thousand words. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: That woman should not wait another day to move on! My girlfriend was with her childhood sweetheart for 15 years. Each year, he would raise the income level he felt he needed before getting married. In the process, he diminished her self-esteem to the point that she felt no one would want her. She finally had enough and threw him out.

Within two weeks, he had another "sweetie" sleeping over, and six months later he married the girl.

LIFE'S TOO SHORT

DEAR L.T.S.: How sad that it took your friend so long to realize she had made a bad investment. However, she should look on the bright side. If they were still together, she'd still be waiting.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone—teens to seniors—is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Pastimes

WONDERWORD
By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — at least once. Some go down only, and some go both. Find them all. CIRCLED WORDS: Letters only. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The letters are in the words.

THINGS THAT ARE PLAT

Solution: 5 letters

R I V E R U T C E T I H C R A
Y O R G N I L I E C O O S W
D R C E R B H L S N A M L O
N R R L O O S D P O P I D
P G R U F U N U E A O R R M N
I D I D I G F N N T U H F R I
A L M S A S E H D C Q S A W
T O L T E E P L A N K L S R D
F M E I D D H I E D A E S L
O D V O E B W B A D E T D E R
R T O I R P I O E B N R B I E
M R H U S P R M O U A A O T W
S A S A A O E A O C L D A L O
P H L A Y E R C C E P L G R L
E G I O V D E S K S P A N E L

Architecture, Bridge, Bers, Bench, Board, Bones, Bread, Brush, Cards, Carpet, Cat, Cigar, Chair, Clasp, Compressed, Condensed, Counter, Design, Decks, Doors, Elongated, Floor, Ground, Impact, Lake, Layer, Lower, Medal, Mirror, Mobile, Mold, Pencil, Plane, Plank, Plate, Platform, Quilt, Record, River, Road, Roll, Roof, Sags, Shovel, Slim, Slurp, Smooth, Spread, Squash, Vase, Voice, Wide, Window, Wire, Yesterday's Answer, Allie, etc.

CROSSWORD
By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Bar wood
4 Goldberg
50 Beach-
lions
51 Exam
8 Grand
adventure
12 —
Mugger
13 Legion
aditive
14 Black, to
pces
15 Big-
beaked
bird
17 Broadway
bigher
18 Perpoint
19 Lay plan
21 Fall over
24 Chic no
more
25 Pa'sian
pal
28 Actor, Run
28 Judicial
ative
32 Bore
tops
34 Larry's pal
36 Inconside-
rate
37 Delight
39 Last
(Abbr.)
41 Whopper
42 Ba
heroree

DOWN
44 Legend-
ary
46 Little kid
50 Beach-
lions
51 Exam
8 Grand
adventure
12 —
Mugger
13 Legion
aditive
14 Black, to
pces
15 Big-
beaked
bird
17 Broadway
bigher
18 Perpoint
19 Lay plan
21 Fall over
24 Chic no
more
25 Pa'sian
pal
28 Actor, Run
28 Judicial
ative
32 Bore
tops
34 Larry's pal
36 Inconside-
rate
37 Delight
39 Last
(Abbr.)
41 Whopper
42 Ba
heroree

Solution time: 25 mins.

STUMPED?
For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-228-5555. Six per minute. Launch technology. Prices: 11¢ only. A King Features service. NYL.


CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY
Jonny Lang, Sara Gilbert, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Selleck

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: This can be a great year for you if you aspire to reach your goals. It's the time of new beginnings and you must let down your guard and stop fearing failure. Success will not elude you this year. Your numbers are 6, 15, 24, 33, 42, 49

EUGENIA LAST
THE LAST WORD
OF AMERICAN



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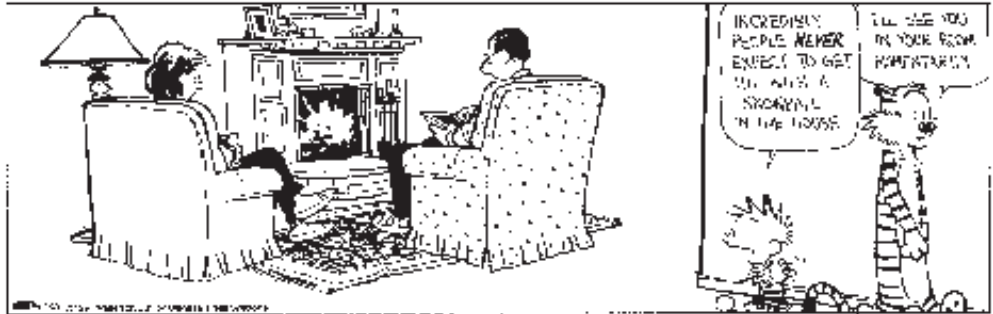
- **ARIES** (March 21-April 19)
This is the perfect time to take advantage of your options. A better position may be just around the corner if you make inquiries now. Consider doing what you do best. □□□
- **TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)
You may have trouble containing your feelings today. Don't be shy if you really feel strongly about something or someone. Romantic opportunities will develop through social events. □□□
- **GEMINI** (May 21-June 20)
Take care of matters concerning home life and property. This is a perfect day to set things straight and get things in order. Investments can be lucrative, but only if they are practical. □□□
- **CANCER** (June 21-July 22)
Listen to the message that someone is sending you. It could be that this person has a greater interest in you than you realize. An opportunity to learn about a different culture is apparent. □□□□
- **LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22)
Someone you work with will be underplaying your ability. Speak up for yourself if there is a position that interests you. You should be concerned about something that is going on in your home. □□
- **VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Think about taking a journey to somewhere totally different. Travel and learning about new cultures should be at the top of your to-do list. Attend a trade show where you can pick up some valuable information regarding a hobby. □□□□□
- **LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Make some changes to your personal papers or consider contributing more to a retirement fund. The help you offer someone in need will lead to a surprising payback. □□□
- **SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
This is a day for love and romance. If you are single, approach someone who interests you. If you are in a relationship, do something to make your partner love you even more. □□□□
- **SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
This can be a highly productive day. If you put your mind to it, you can put yourself in a position to advance in your chosen field. Nothing is out of reach today. □□□
- **CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
This is a favorable day to approach someone new or to talk to your current partner about the way you feel. Social activity will lead to all sorts of new possibilities. □□□□□
- **AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Someone you thought you could count on may not be on your side. Take a better look at the people you have been dealing with and eliminate the ones that have been holding you back. □□
- **PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20)
Your very original ideas will garner the recognition you need to encourage you to continue. Any proposals you make will bring positive results. □□□□

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are practical and determined to get what you want. You can be stubborn, but are resourceful and can stand on your own two feet. You are entertaining — attracting many friends along the way.

Check out Eugenia's Web sites at astroadvice.com and eugenialast.com.

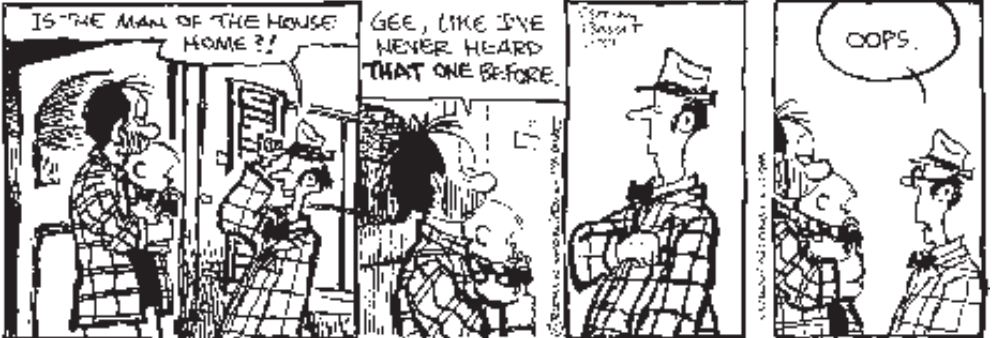
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



Garfield

By Jim Davis



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy





Super Bowl set to be defensive struggle

By **BOB BAUM**
AP SPORTS WRITER



HOUSTON (AP) — Two teams built on dominating defense not awe-some offense, rosters bereft of big names, coaches with a public persona as dry as the Texas sand.

On the surface, the Carolina Panthers against New England Patriots seems a super bore of a Super Bowl. But, as any NFL linebacker will tell you, a bone-jarring defensive struggle has a certain beauty of its own.

"I don't think it's going to be boring, I think it's going to be a damn good game," New England linebacker Ted Johnson said. "It's two teams that have very strong wills, have a lot of confidence in what they do. It's going to be a war of wills, and I think that makes for a pretty exciting game."

The Panthers' defense is simple power, featuring a front four that applies severe pressure without the help of a blitz, backed by solid linebackers and an ever-improving secondary.

The Patriots are more complicated, adjusting under coach Bill Belichick's tutelage to take advantage of the perceived weakness of an offense.

"At the end of the day, I think we both play well," Carolina coach John Fox said, "not just against yards, but in allowing points. They

are two different styles, but the end results are the same."

The Panthers blend their strong defense with a ball-control offense, featuring the running of Stephen Davis and DeShaun Foster. It's no "Greatest Show on Turf," but it works.

"We know our defense is going to take care of their job, and hopefully we'll do what we've done all year long," Carolina guard Kevin Donnalley said, "keep it close and find a way to win in the end."

Seven of the Panthers' 14 victories were by three points or less. Four of their wins were in overtime. They were seven-point underdogs against New England, but they were supposed to lose in the second round in St. Louis, and in the NFC championship game in Philadelphia, too.

Maybe most NFL fans would rather see the Rams, Packers or Eagles in Houston, but the Panthers made their case on the field. They are the ultimate no-name playoff team, with a quarterback - Jake Delhomme - who wasn't even drafted.

"We've been dealing with this all through the playoffs," Fox said. "The perception on the outside is something I can't change. The perception on the inside is that we believe we belong, and we'll give it our best shot."

Odds makers often are wrong in the Super Bowl.

Last year, Oakland was a 3 1/2-

point choice and was routed 48-21 by Tampa Bay. Two years ago, New England came into the big game a 14-point underdog to St. Louis and not only covered, but won 20-17 on Adam Vinatieri's last-second field goal.

Since the 1996 Super Bowl, only two favorites have covered - Denver in 1999 and Baltimore in 2001.

The Patriots, after winning as an underdog two years ago, aren't going to get carried away with being favored.

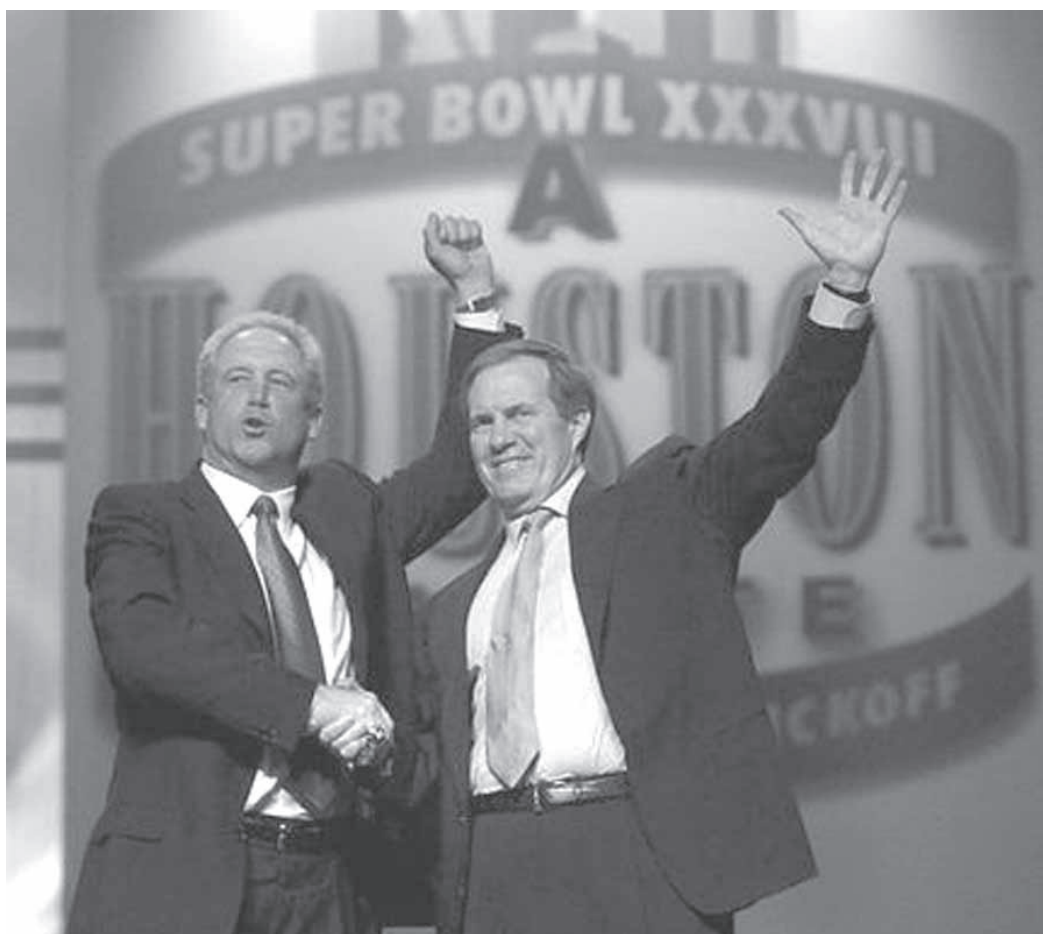
"We know this is going to be our toughest game of the year and that's what we're preparing for," Belichick said. "If we don't play that way, I'm sure we'll have plenty of problems."

Belichick has had two weeks to prepare a defensive game plan to counter Carolina's grind-it-out style. His reputation as a defensive mastermind is a big reason New England is such a big favorite.

New England has the closest thing to a superstar in Tom Brady, who won this game in his second pro season two years ago.

"In my opinion, he's probably the best quarterback we're going to face all year," Carolina linebacker Dan Morgan said. "We've faced some good ones, but he's so precise at what he does. We just need to play a smart game because we know he's going to play a smart game, too."

Delhomme has studied Brady's style.



AP

Carolina Panthers head coach John Fox, left, and New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick shake hands during a Super Bowl opening ceremony honoring some of the greatest Houston athletes Monday, Jan. 26, 2004 in Houston. The Panthers and the Patriots will face off in Super Bowl XXXVIII, Sunday, Feb. 1.

"Watching him two years ago, his second year in the league, it didn't bother him," Delhomme said. "The game wasn't too big for him. That's the one thing I tried to take from him. He's a winner. I tried to do that this year with this team."

To finish as a winner, Delhomme must succeed against a Patriots' defense that led the league in fewest points allowed (14.9), shut out three opponents and allowed just one touchdown in its last six home games. Quarterbacks threw 11

touchdowns against New England, and were intercepted by the Patriots 29 times.

"I really don't care if it's 3-0," Patriots defensive lineman Richard Seymour said. "If we get another ring on our fingers, that's the only thing that matters."

No. 14 Georgia Tech beats Clemson, 76-69

ATLANTA (AP)—So much for B.J. Elder's slump.

Elder scored a career-high 36 points to lead No. 14 Georgia Tech to a 76-69 victory over Clemson on Tuesday night, hardly resembling the guy who was shooting less than 31 percent in Atlantic Coast Conference games.

The Yellow Jackets (16-3, 4-2 ACC) bounced back from a weekend loss at North Carolina State, handing Clemson (8-10, 1-6) its fourth straight defeat.

Elder had 20 points in the first half and surpassed his previous career best of 25 with nearly 10 minutes remaining. By the end, he had the most points by a Georgia Tech player since James Forrest scored 36 against Maryland in 1994.

Elder connected on 12 of 20 shots from the field, including six 3-pointers. He wound up with nearly half of Georgia Tech's points; Marvin Lewis, with 11, was the only teammate in double figures.

Elder was one of the reasons Georgia Tech got off to a school-record 12-0 start, but he had struggled since the start of league play. In the last five games, he averaged just 11.8 points and even started one contest on the bench.

His shooting was especially



AP

Georgia Tech's B.J. Elder drives to the basket as Clemson's Akin Akingbala defends during the first half Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2004 in Atlanta.

abysmal - 15-of-49 from the field, 30.6 percent. From outside the 3-point line, he was only 7-of-24 (29 percent).

That all changed against Clemson. He finished one point shy of the school record for points in an ACC game, a 37-point effort by Dennis Scott in 1990. Still, it was the highest-scoring game by an ACC player this season, surpassing 30 by Florida State's Tim Pickett in an upset of North Carolina.

Elder carried the Yellow Jackets in the first half, scoring 18 of his team's 22 points in one stretch. He finished off that spurt with a three-point play, putting Georgia Tech ahead to stay at 24-21 with 7:35 remaining in the period.

Appropriately, Elder finished off the half with a dunk, giving the Yellow Jackets a 40-34 lead.

After Clemson closed to 53-49 with just under 11 minutes left, Elder took over again. He scored 12 straight points for the Yellow Jackets, capped off by a 3-pointer that pushed the lead to 65-51 - Georgia Tech's largest lead of the night.

The Tigers chipped away at the margin, getting as close as six points. But Georgia Tech sealed the victory at the foul line in the final minutes.

Louisville's Pitino hopes to return soon

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP)—Louisville coach Rick Pitino might miss only one game after treatment for an undisclosed condition that has caused him pain for months.

Pitino, 51, said Monday he was taking an indefinite leave of absence to determine the cause of the "urological-related" pain in his left side.

He underwent tests at the Cleveland Clinic on Tuesday and was optimistic about returning to work in less than a week.

"I hope to be back coaching by this weekend and resuming full responsibility with our team," Pitino said in a statement. "It is not a cancer-related or life-threatening matter."

Assistant coach Kevin Willard is leading the team in Pitino's absence. The No. 4 Cardinals (15-1) have home games with Houston on Wednesday and Marquette on Saturday.

"Right now as a team, our main worry is coach Pitino," Willard said Tuesday night, after telling the team that Pitino might be back as soon as this weekend. "We know he's going to come back healthy and everything is going to be fine."

The players were energized by the good news.

"It was a big sigh of a relief," said junior guard Larry O'Bannon. "We just want to go out there and take care of Houston for him."

Luke Whitehead, Louisville's leading rebounder, said Willard told the team to make Pitino proud.

"We can't drop off, we've got to keep our energy at the same level as if Coach Pitino was there," he said.

Holy Cross coach Ralph Willard, Kevin's father and one of Pitino's best friends, said Pitino has been complaining about the worsening discomfort for the past month.

"I told him, 'Get it done. You have to get to the bottom of this before it becomes debilitating,'" said Ralph Willard, who talks to Pitino daily. "That's what concerned me."

The players said Pitino never told them he was in pain.

"There were rumors," O'Bannon said. "But as far as how severe it was, we didn't know anything. Any time he had anything to do with basketball, you'd never know anything was wrong with him."

Ralph Willard said Pitino had tests for prostate and bladder cancer at a Louisville hospital earlier this month. Both turned up negative, Ralph Willard said.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Mobil invitational pushed back to Feb. 10

The 2004 season of the Mobil Oil Marianas Invitational Co-ed Basketball Tournament would tentatively start on February 10.

Organizers said the invitational has been pushed back by a couple of weeks to allow teams to better prepare for the new season.

For more information about the upcoming Mobil cage league please contact Mobil's Jojo Dadivas at 483-3363 or Abner Venus at 287-5991. *(Mark Rabago)*

Little League schedules series of meetings

The Saipan Little League Baseball Inc. Board of Directors is informing all 2004 managers, coaches, umpires, statisticians, and interested volunteers, that the following important dates for working session and deadline is schedule before the league starts on February 8, a Sunday.

□ January 28, 2004, Wednesday: Final deadline for all documents and fees. Contact: Martin Pangelinan at 288-6076.

□ January 29, 2004, Thursday: Board of Directors working session.

□ January 31, 2004, Saturday: Managers and Coaches will have a general meeting at 9am at the MHS Gym Conference Room. Agenda will be games schedule, opening ceremony, and local ground rules.

For more information regarding the above dates, contact league president Joe Borja at 664-3874, vice president Jess Wabol at 256-1794, secretary Zerah Santos 235-6260/5, treasurer Martin Pangelinan at 234-6076, umpire coordinator Jack Agoun at 234-0613, chief statistician Mike Borja at 664-8830, player agent Ben Jones at 322-2305, manager rep. Nora Quitugua at 322-9304, safety officer Alfred Saures at 322-6296, or District Administrator James A. Ada at 322-9451. *(Shan Seman)*

SEDA awards banquet on Feb. 1

The Saipan Electronic Darts Association will hold its 2003 awards banquet on February 1, a Sunday, from 10:30am to 6pm at Charlie's at the Pacific Islands Club.

The 2004 SEDA season will begin a week later on February 8.

For more information about SEDA and its upcoming banquet, please contact Gary at 236-2347. *(Mark Rabago)*

Saipan Softball Association to hold two leagues next month

The Saipan Softball Association announced yesterday that it would host the Men's 35-and-Up Slow Pitch Softball League and the Men's Slow Pitch Softball Business League next month.

All interested players, managers, coaches, and teams are encouraged to begin preparations for the two leagues, which both require an \$800 entrance fee from each team.

Meetings concerning the two leagues will be set and announced on a later date.

For more information regarding the above matters, contact association president Robert A. Guerrero at 888-0215, league coordinator Liz Palacios at 235-9890, or association treasurer Peding Tenorio at 322-9982/3. *(Shan Seman)*

INJURY

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Ferrero, who lost the U.S. Open final to Roddick, won seven consecutive games and gave up only nine points to lead 1-0 in the second set before the left-handed Arazzi recovered and started pounding forehand winners.

Ferrero saved three set points in the second set and two in the third before forcing tiebreakers in each. He advanced when Arazzi dumped a backhand return into the net facing his first match point.

"I played really good when I started the match, but I knew Arazzi always played good rallies and would come back," Ferrero said. "I'm happy to beat him. It was a real tough match."

Schnyder described her run to the semifinals as "enormous."

"I mean, I'm so happy to be here and to play semis ... it's hard to describe," said Schnyder, who beat 12th-seeded Paulo Suarez in the third round and Nathalie Dechy in the fourth.

Raymond, a third-round winner over Venus Williams, is 0-5 in her career against Schnyder. The 30-year-old American had 44 unforced errors and only 24 winners.

"I don't think that I've been this disappointed losing a match," Raymond said. "I really, really thought that I had a good shot of really having a breakthrough here."

Raymond's loss leaves Agassi as the only American still in contention at Melbourne Park.

Camacho is queen of SBA monthly gig

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER



Dianne Camacho played with the boys last Sunday and Monday night in the inaugural Pepsi King of the Lanes Tournament and wound up in 10th place.

But more importantly, the experienced kegler won the ladies side event and took home a consolation prize courtesy of the Saipan Bowling Association.

Camacho finished with 747 pin falls to top the ladies division. She averaged 186.75 pin falls in the four-game series.

She started things off with a 198 in her first game. Camacho then followed it up with scores of 177 and 158 before coming up with a great run in the fourth that netted her 214 pin falls.

A far second to Camacho was Emi Williams. Williams rolled a four-game series of 676 and averaged 169 pin falls a game.

She bowled identical 167 pin falls in her first two games before making a 153 and 189 in her final two lane appearances.

Third place then went to Becky Reyes, who had a total of 635 in the four-game series to wound up with a 158.75 pin fall per game average. Reyes scored 156, 156, 145, and 178 in the four-games series.

Malou Cabigao finished fourth among the ladies after bowling 622 pin falls. She averaged 155.50 pin falls a game after rolling a 158, 151, 163, and 150 in the four-game series.

Fifth place was Cindy Iginoef with a four-game series score of 577. She rolled a 106, 143, 161, and 167 to average 144.25 pin falls a game.

Ron Cal was in sixth place after totaling 569. She averaged



MARK RABAGO

January Pepsi King of the Lanes winner Simon Manacop is joined by lady topnotcher Dianne Camacho during the awarding ceremony Monday evening at the Saipan Bowling Center.

142.25 pin falls a game following a four-games series score of 118, 153, 138 and 161.

Mishel Pacheco and Annie Picklesimer round up the lady participants with four-game scores of 558 and 511 pin falls, respectively.

Pacheco averaged 139.50 pin falls a game after rolling a 164, 143, 116, and 135 in the four-game series. Picklesimer,

on the other hand, averaged 137.75 a game after bowling a 149, 112, 127, and 162 in the monthly tournament.

The 1st Annual Pepsi King of the Lanes will throne 12 Pepsi King of the Lanes monthly winners through the course of the year.

It will culminate in a year-end Pepsi King of the Lanes Tournament where the top bowlers,

which will be based on the newly introduced Bowling Ranking System of the SBA, will square it out for the 2004 championship.

Cash prizes will be up for grabs in the monthly tournament, which will alternate between Saipan Bowling Center and the Capitol Bowling Center. A \$1,000 purse, meanwhile, awaits the 2004 Pepsi King of the Lanes champion.

Boxers wanted for international bouts



Local boxers interested in being exposed to international competition finally have a chance at fulfilling that goal.

According to a press release, the Philmar Pacific International Promotions, LTD. will promote international bouts this February 28 at the Garapan Central Park.

Dubbed the Thrilla in Saipan, the event will not only feature fighters from the CNMI, but also topnotch contenders from Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Amateur boxing will serve as preliminary fights leading up to the main event.

The event is scheduled to get underway at 6pm and will last until all fights



MARK RABAGO

Local boxing promoter Al Taitano, extreme right, and a number of boxing enthusiasts on the island will promote the Thrilla on Saipan this February 28 at the Garapan Central Park.

have concluded.

The release also added that the event will assist with rev-

enue and tourism in Saipan.

For more information or to register, please contact Al

Taitano at 234-1734 (home), 234-8607/09 (work), or 483-2969 (cellular).

SAKOVICH

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And finally Buadromo, Sakovich said, was a revelation especially at the end part of the

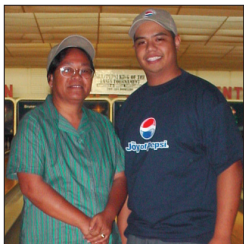
competition in Tasmania.

"I was really happy for Jolyn that she was able to salvage a medal in the final days and it was a gold medal at that," said Sakovich.

He went on to say that Buadromo was able to lower her personal best time in two of the five final events she qualified in.

Suva, Fiji South Pacific Games silver medalist Dean Palacios of

the CNMI was supposed to be the sixth member of the Oceania team but begged off from the trip to concentrate on his studies. Palacios is a graduating high school student at MBA.



Camacho is queen of SBA monthly gig

Dianne Camacho played with the boys last Sunday and Monday night in the inaugural Pepsi King of the Lanes Tournament and wound up in 10th place.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Super Bowl set to be defensive struggle

Two teams built on dominating defense not awesome offense, rosters bereft of big names, coaches with a public persona as dry as the Texas sand.



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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Sakovich extremely happy with team

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER

Bill Sakovich believes this year's Oceania team that competed in a couple of meets in Australia may have been better than the one he mentored a year ago.

The 2004 edition of Team Oceania comprised of the CNMI's Nina Mosley, Guam's Connor Keith and Fiji's William Mar, Chad Miller, and Jolyn Buadromo.

In all, this year's team picked up a total of nine medals in the Tasmanian Swimming Championship that finished just the other day in Hobart and

had one final in the more competitive New South Wales Swimming Championships that was held in Sydney a week ago.

"I don't want to sound very positive, but I truly believe that this year's team was better than last year's, which in the beginning I thought wouldn't be the case. They were definitely older and they pulled through," said Sakovich.

As a team, Sakovich said the three Fiji swimmers and the two Marianas swimmers qualified for 16 finals and swam 18 personal best times.

Individually, Keith won two gold medals, Miller a gold and a silver medal, Mosley and Buadromo a gold medal

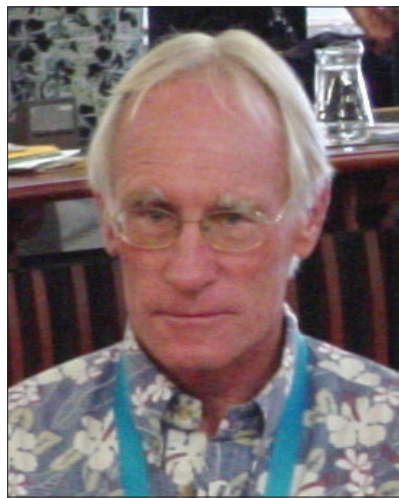
apiece, and Mar two silver medals.

But more than the hardware, Sakovich, as always, placed more weight on the ability of his wards to better their previous records.

Sakovich once again praised Mar for being the team's most consistent performer. He said the 16-year-old wunderkind swam well in both meets and achieved personal bests in all five finals he participated in. Mar also lowered three Fiji records.

Mosley, on the other hand, Sakovich noted, was able to reset her personal bests in five of the seven final events she competed in.

He also said that the 13-year-old



Sakovich

Marianas Baptist Academy student broke two NMI records. Mosley reset the old national standard in the 50m freestyle and eclipsed the age group record in the 100m freestyle.

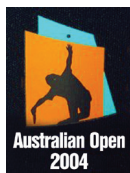
Sakovich also praised Miller and Keith. He said Miller went up against great competition in the NSW and Tasmanian meets but more than held his own. Miller went on to improve his personal best times in two of the five finals he competed in.

Keith, meanwhile, erased his personal bests in four of eight finals he swam in and swam extremely well early in the Tasmanian meet, where he bagged two gold medals.

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Injury may force Clijsters out of Open

By JOHN PYE
AP SPORTS WRITER



MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Kim Clijsters aggravated an ankle injury in her Australian Open quarterfinal victory over Anastasia Myskina on Wednesday, leaving the second-seeded Belgian star questionable for the semifinals.

Clijsters, a semifinalist in all four majors last season but still without a Grand Slam title, beat Myskina 6-2, 7-6 (9) to set up a semifinal match against Patty Schnyder of Switzerland.

Schnyder, seeded 22nd, advanced to her first Grand Slam semifinal with a 7-5 (2), 6-3 victory over Lisa Raymond.

In the men's quarterfinals, French Open winner Juan Carlos Ferrero beat Morocco's Hicham Arazi 6-1, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (5).

Ferrero, seeded third, will play the winner of a late match between Wimbledon champion Roger Federer, seeded second, and Argentina's David Nalbandian.

In the first men's semifinal, defending champion Andre Agassi was set to play Marat Safin on Thursday.

Clijsters lost the first four games of the second set against Myskina and needed a medical timeout for her left ankle after holding in the fifth.

"I'll have to see how it reacts," Clijsters said. "I'm going to have a week off after this anyway, so I might as well go for it and give myself a shot. But, on the other hand, if I can't walk tomorrow, it's stupid to go out there."

Clijsters won five of the next six games after getting courtside treatment in the second set and had two match points on the sixth-seeded Myskina's serve in the 12th before the Russian held to force a tiebreaker.

Clijsters had three more match points in the tiebreaker and saved two set points before the match in 90 minutes when Myskina's backhand shot drifted wide.



Belgium's Kim Clijsters has her ankle strapped during her quarterfinal match against Russia's Anastasia Myskina at the Australian Open in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2004.

Clijsters, who injured her left ankle at the Hopman Cup and was sidelined for two weeks leading into the tournament, said she'd ice her ankle, take painkillers and get the area taped before deciding in the morning if she can play in the semifinal Thursday.

In the other semifinal, top-ranked Justine Henin-Hardenne will face Colombia's Fabiola Zuluaga, seeded 32nd.

Henin-Hardenne and Clijsters met in two all-Belgian Grand Slam finals last season, with Henin-Hardenne winning in the French and U.S. Opens.

With No. 3 Venus Williams out in

the third round, Serena Williams not defending the title and No. 4 Amelie Mauresmo forced to default her quarterfinal because of a back problem, Clijsters and Henin-Hardenne were strong favorites for the title.

Clijsters said her ankle wasn't as painful as it was when she withdrew from a warmup tournament in Sydney. She said she "just sort of jammed it again."

She started with only three unforced errors as she raced for a 5-0 lead in the first set, but ended with 47 unforced errors to Myskina's 45.

"I started off really well, was feel-

ing good ... I wish I ended like that," Clijsters said. "I had a little stumble in the second, then I got taped very tight, which kept me from making it any worse. That's maybe why I was rushing it a bit."

"I was very happy I could pull it off in two sets, otherwise it would have been hard."

With top-seeded Andy Roddick out of the tournament in a quarterfinal upset to unseeded Safin, former No. 1 Ferrero and Federer are vying for the No. 1 spot in men's tennis.

See INJURY on Page 27

Youth soccer registration this Saturday

By MARK RABAGO
REPORTER

Boys and girls between the ages of five and 12 years old are invited to register for a youth soccer program being organized by the Commonwealth Youth Soccer Organization this coming February.

No previous soccer experience is required for participants and registration is set for this Saturday, January 31, at the American Memorial Park band shell.

Prior to the actual soccer tournament, sign-ups would be taught soccer rules and playing techniques during practice games and scrimmages.

According to the association's spokesperson Joe Crone, soccer practices and scrimmages will be held on Tuesdays from 4:30pm to 5:30pm at the AMP. Actual games, meanwhile, will be played on Saturdays from 4:30pm to 5:30pm also at the AMP.

Entry fee for the soccer clinic and accompanying tournament is only \$25 and would include team uniforms and other associated costs.

Crone said that it is important for interested children to sign up this Saturday so that the organization would have an idea of how many kids would be participating in the soccer tournament, which is expected to start next month. Practice and scrimmage sessions, incidentally, begin on February 17.

He also said that the association is still looking for parent volunteers and that it is more than willing to hold a coaches' clinic for all interested parents who wish to coach teams.

For more information on the upcoming youth soccer clinic and tournament please contact Joe Crone at 322-1919.